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Agenda item 64

Reduction of military budgets

Report of the First Committee

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I. Introduction

1. The item entitled "Reduction of military budgets: (a) reduction of military budgets; (b) objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures" was included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 35/142 B of 12 December 1980.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 4 October 2001, the First Committee decided to hold a general debate on all disarmament and international security items allocated to it, namely, items 64 to 84, which was held at the 3rd to 11th meetings, from 8 to 12 and from 15 to 17 October (see A/C.1/56/PV.3-11). Thematic discussions on the items were held, and draft resolutions were introduced and considered, at the 12th to 17th meetings, from 22 to 24 and on 26, 29 and 30 October (see A/C.1/56/PV.12-17). Action on all draft resolutions was taken at the 18th to 24th meetings, on 30 and 31 October and on 2, 5 and 6 November (see A/C.1/56/PV.18-24).

4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures (A/56/267).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.42

5. At the 16th meeting, on 29 October, the representative of Germany, on behalf of Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Czech Republic,

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Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures" (A/C.1/56/L.42). Subsequently, Cyprus, Grenada, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mali, Nicaragua, the Niger, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Tonga and Uruguay joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

6. At its 19th meeting, on 31 October, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.42 without a vote (see para. 7).

III. Recommendation of the First Committee

7. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 53/72 of 4 December 1998 and 54/43 of 1 December 1999 on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures,

Also recalling its resolution 35/142 B of 12 December 1980, which introduced the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures, and its resolutions 48/62 of 16 December 1993, 49/66 of 15 December 1994, 51/38 of 10 December 1996 and 52/32 of 9 December 1997, calling upon all Member States to participate in it, and its resolution 47/54 B of 9 December 1992, endorsing the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters and inviting Member States to provide the Secretary-General with relevant information regarding their implementation,

Noting that since then national reports on military expenditures and on the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters have been submitted by a number of Member States belonging to different geographic regions,

Convinced that the improvement of international relations forms a sound basis for promoting further openness and transparency in all military matters,

Also convinced that transparency in military matters is an essential element for building a climate of trust and confidence between States worldwide and that a better flow of objective information on military matters can help relieve international tension and is therefore an important contribution to conflict prevention,

Noting the role of the United Nations standardized reporting on military expenditure, as instituted through its resolution 35/142 B, as an important instrument to enhance transparency in military matters,

Conscious that the value of the reporting system would be enhanced by a broader participation of Member States,

Welcoming, therefore, the report of the Secretary-General on ways and means to implement the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters,[1] including, in particular, how to strengthen and broaden participation in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures,

Recalling that the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters recommended certain areas for further consideration, such as the improvement of the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures,

Noting the efforts of several regional organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures, including standardized annual exchanges of relevant information among their member States,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to report annually, by 30 April, to the Secretary-General their military expenditures for the latest fiscal year for which data are available, using, preferably and to the extent possible, the reporting instrument as recommended in its resolution 35/142 B or, as appropriate, any other format developed in conjunction with similar reporting on military expenditures to other international or regional organizations, and, in the same context, encourages Member States that have no information to provide to submit nil returns;

2. *Recommends* the guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters to all Member States for implementation, fully taking into account specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region, on the basis of initiatives and with the agreement of the States of the region concerned;

3. *Encourages* relevant international bodies and regional organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures and to enhance complementarity among reporting systems, taking into account the particular characteristics of each region, and to consider the possibility of an exchange of information with the United Nations;

4. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures;[2]

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, within available resources:

(a) To continue the practice of sending an annual note verbale to Member States requesting the submission of data to the reporting system, together with the reporting format and related instructions, and to publish in a timely fashion in appropriate United Nations media the due date for transmitting data on military expenditures;

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[1] A/54/298.

[2] A/56/267.

(b) To circulate annually the reports on military expenditures as received from Member States;

(c) To continue consultations with relevant international bodies with a view to ascertaining requirements for adjusting the present instrument, with a view to encouraging wider participation, and to make recommendations, based on the outcome of those consultations and taking into account the views of Member States, on necessary changes to the content and structure of the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures;

(d) To encourage relevant international bodies and organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures and to consult with those bodies and organizations with emphasis on examining possibilities for enhancing complementarity among international and regional reporting systems and for exchanging related information between those bodies and the United Nations;

(e) To encourage the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Africa, in Asia and the Pacific, and in Latin America and the Caribbean to assist Member States in their regions in enhancing their knowledge of the standardized reporting system;

(f) To promote international and regional/subregional symposia and training seminars to explain the purpose of the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and to give relevant technical instructions;

(g) To report on experiences gained during such symposia and training seminars;

6. *Encourages* Member States:

(a) To inform the Secretary-General about possible problems with the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and their reasons for not submitting the requested data;

(b) To provide the Secretary-General, in time for deliberation by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, with their views and suggestions on ways and means to strengthen and broaden participation in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures, including necessary changes to its content and structure;

7. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures".